

[Tom Barry, Chair]

EXHIBIT 2
DATE 2/5/2013
HB 264

Good Morning, ladies and gentlemen.

My name is Jackie Burgess and I come before you as both the Executive Director for the Sanders County Council on Aging and as a former gaming industry professional. I have held gaming licenses in three jurisdictions: Nevada, New Jersey and Connecticut, and I understand and accept the need for gaming regulations for commercial high stakes bingo operations.

But senior bingo as played in Montana is not a commercial operation, ~~and it~~ surely isn't "high stakes." Bingo is a recreational opportunity offered as a social activity. It provides our older citizens with a number of tangible benefits: physical activity, mental stimulation, and personal contact with others. Many of the folks who play senior bingo attend a congregate meal at their local senior center and then settle in for an hour or so of friendly play. IT IS ALSO A MUCH NEEDED FUNDRAISER FOR THESE CENTERS

Senior Centers all over the state offer low stakes bingo games to their members and guests on a regular basis. There are over 150 Non-tribal Senior Centers in Montana, and according to the DOJ Gaming Division website, as of 12.31.12 only 5 of them were licensed for Bingo: one in Libby, one in Missoula and three in Sanders County. However, in an informal telephone survey that my office conducted of 44 centers (one in each county), 30 of them offer bingo as a recreational activity on a regularly scheduled basis, anywhere from three times per week to once per month. In Sanders County the average attendance at each game is 15 people, and average annual bingo income ~~for the centers surveyed~~ is about \$2000. SURELY NOT "HIGH STAKES."

Currently the application for a Senior Bingo Gaming license is the same 20 page application that any commercial operation must submit. It includes a lengthy criminal background check of the individual seniors who call the games and count the small sums of money, it requires financial disclosures from those folks, and it requires fingerprinting of every member that has anything to do with operating or supervising the games. It requires no less than ten attachments – everything from tax returns to Certificates of Existence. And a center with the recommended 3-person bingo committee must pay over \$400 just to apply for the license.

While we support the elimination of this onerous licensing requirement, we do not suggest that just anyone at any senior center be allowed to operate bingo games without some oversight. But a simplified annual report listing the specifics of the year's gaming activities would be much easier for our seniors to complete, and would serve to keep the Gaming Control folks informed. *TO DATE THE DOJ HAS BEEN UNINTERESTED IN THIS IDEA.*

I can assure you that no one gets rich playing senior bingo, but the activity does enrich those who play the games. It also provides some much needed funds for the Centers, helping them to keep the lights on and the parking lots plowed. I respectfully ask that you assist our seniors by eliminating this expensive and complicated licensure requirement.